

Executive Summary

Peer Support Specialists for Person-Directed Planning

Project Goal

One project will develop and pilot a peer supports training program for individuals who live independently with the use of Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) so they understand their options and can lead their own person centered planning process.

Relationship to TCDD State Plan Goals

Goal 3 Increase the access that individuals with developmental disabilities and families of individuals with developmental disabilities have to information, training, and support to advocate for themselves and/or to collaborate with allies to impact public policy, service systems, and community supports.

Objective 3.5. Demonstrate at least one program through which people with developmental disabilities provide peer supports to other people with developmental disabilities by 9/30/2021.

Funding and Duration

Up to \$100,000 for year one, and up to \$125,000 for years two through four, for one project.

Background

The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services released new Medicaid Home and Community Based Services settings rules in 2014. The rules require that:

- Providers take full advantage of opportunities for people to have access to the benefits of community living and to receive services in the most integrated setting.
- Medicaid funding and policy support strategies meet obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Supreme Court decision in “Olmstead v. L.C., 527” U.S. 581 (1999).
- Service plans are developed through a person-centered planning process.
- Individuals with developmental disabilities receive information and support to lead the process and make informed choices.

People who have not been fully integrated in their communities may find it hard to imagine the opportunities they have. Peers who have the experience of independent living can assist them to see what is possible, to identify both opportunities and barriers to achieving their goals, and help them to successfully address barriers. A peer can also provide objective encouragement, guidance, listening, teaching, suggestions, and a bridge to community. The Medicaid/CHIP Division of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) recognizes the benefits of peer supports and has expressed interest in both promoting peer supports and partnering in the development and implementation of the training program developed through this project.

TCDD has funded peer-to-peer support projects in the past. This project would be similar in some ways, but would focus specifically on connecting persons with developmental disabilities who are receiving HCBS waiver services that require a person-centered service plan with well-informed peers who can support them to take control of their plans. Other Councils on Developmental Disabilities could provide information and technical assistance to an organization developing training in Texas:

- The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities is building a peer-to-peer mentor project to link one peer who provides supports with two peers who receive supports. The training has components we would want to see in a Texas peer to peer supports project: Basic mentoring skills, Medicaid Services, tools like a “My Story Worksheet” and others.
- The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities funded a one-year youth peer-mentoring pilot. Peer mentors were required to mentor a peer for at least one year. The mentoring included weekly contact with the person they were mentoring by phone, e-mail or in person, and attending social events together. Both people kept a journal of their successes and challenges. TCDD has the training material from this project.
- The Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council provides an annual Peer Mentoring 101 workshop for the purpose of training people with developmental disabilities to become effective peer mentors to others with developmental disabilities. Peer Mentoring is a Medicaid covered service in Michigan when it is written in an individual’s plan of service.

Definitions

Peer Support Specialists are individuals who:

- Have a developmental disability;
- Live in the community;
- Use publicly funded services and supports, such as: SSI, publicly-funded housing, Medicaid waiver services, institutional services, work incentives and supported employment; and
- Have received training to provide certain types of supports to peers.

Peer Support Specialists must demonstrate respect for an individual’s rights and honor the individual’s culture and beliefs, even if that individual makes choices they might never make.

Coaches are individuals who may or may not have a developmental disability who will provide emotional support, information, and direct assistance to the Peer Support Specialists to develop specific action plans and identify the resources needed to make sure their peer’s plan is implemented.

Project Description

Over the four years this project is funded, the grantee will:

- Research and incorporate useful ideas from similar projects.
- Build relationships with HCBS waiver participants, providers using person-directed planning, state agency program staff, local authorities, managed care organizations, and legally authorized representatives.
- Conduct outreach to identify a diverse group of individuals with developmental disabilities who are active and included in their communities.
- Hold listening sessions with the identified individuals to capture their stories and the lessons they learned.
- Develop a training curriculum for Peer Support Specialists and Coaches. The training must include, at a minimum:

- Important aspects of service planning processes;
 - Mentoring skills;
 - Medicaid acute and long-term care services;
 - Basic employment supports;
 - Options for deeply affordable housing and rental supports that may be available through local public housing or MH/IDD authorities;
 - Formal and informal services and supports that foster self-determination and independence;
 - Benefits of Consumer Directed Services;
 - Person-centered thinking; and
 - Person-centered planning.
- Develop job descriptions for Peer Support Specialists and their coaches.
 - Identify and train at least 20 people with developmental disabilities to provide peer supports.
 - Identify and train coaches.
 - Pilot the program. Each Peer Support Specialist will assist at least ten individuals with developmental disabilities to create a person-centered plan with specific goals and make sure the implementation plan includes the needed services and supports.
 - The grantee will pay Peer Support Specialists, arrange and pay for accommodations required for them to meet their duties, and make sure that employment supports are understood and in place to lessen the risk of losing benefits as a result of earned income.
 - Evaluate the project and use the information gained to improve the training.
 - Develop a plan to include peer supports in the policies and procedures associated with planning processes of current programs and billing guidelines.
 - Prepare a training manual and share the information at statewide conferences.
 - Collaborate with TCDD, HHSC and DADS on program design, implementation, and policies and procedures as needed.

Other Considerations

The training developed through this project will not duplicate the work of Texas' Institute for Person-Centered Practices. However, TCDD expects the philosophy behind the training to be consistent with Person-Centered Practices and recommends that the grantee work with the Institute.

TCDD will work with the Medicaid/CHIP Division of HHSC to determine if a certification is desirable.